



What's wrong with charity?

"The poor are always with us," said Jesus allegedly. Does giving really help alleviate poverty?

charity: to raise money for those in need

stopgap: a temporary way of solving a problem

band-aid: material used to cover a wound, also a temporary solution

patch-up: to restore something that is broken or torn by replacing a part or putting it together

large-scale: big, extensive

self-defeating: meant to solve a problem but actually causing the same or another problem

Charities often target symptoms, not causes

The accusation is that **charity** helps the recipient with their problem, but it doesn't do much to deal with the causes of that problem.

It certainly is true that some charities do **stopgap** or '**band-aid**' work, either exclusively or some of the time.

Combating cancer is a relatively simple scientific problem, while global poverty requires more than a scientific operation or finding a better way to manage world resources.

Combating poverty involves slow processes of political, cultural and social change, with many participants, significant opposition and serious issues of self-determination and coercion to be navigated.

Charity may become a substitute for real justice

The idea is that charity is wrong when it's used to **patch up** the effects of the fundamental injustices that are built into the structure and values of a society.

Charity, from this viewpoint, can sometimes be seen as actually accepting the injustice itself, while trying to mitigate the consequences of the injustice.

Charity may not provide the best solution to a problem

Let's agree that the purpose of giving to charity is to solve particular problems and choose the problem of world poverty.

Let's also agree that we want to do the most effective thing to help reduce world poverty.

Charitable giving may not be the most effective way of solving world poverty. Indeed charitable giving may even distract from finding the best solution - which might involve a complex rethink of the way the world organises its economic relationships, and **large-scale** government initiatives to change people's conditions.

If that is so, then the effort put into charity might be better devoted to pressuring governments to bring about needed change. And governments might be more likely to focus on dealing with poverty if they weren't being helped by charities

Charity may benefit the state rather than the needy

It has been argued that charity can be **self-defeating** if it allows the state to escape some of its responsibilities.

Large-scale philanthropy to support 'essential services' is wrong: Charity to support essential services is bad because it switches provision from government to charity, rather than increasing benefits to the needy.

So, the next time you put a coin in a charity tin you may want to ask yourself: Am I just helping the government cut services and is there something more useful I can do to save the world?

Adapted from BBC Ethics

"Let's chat about that!"

Write your answers in an email and send them to your ECP coach!

- *What issues do you feel strongly about?*
- *Do you give money to registered charities? (e.g. Red Cross, Greenpeace, WWF?)*
- *Are you a member of an NGO like Oxfam?*
- *Do you give money to people begging in the street?*
- *Do you think having large charity organisations is a good idea? Why/why not?*
- *Should charities be a substitute for essential services?*
- *Is it better to give time or money?*
- *Should rich people and corporations be forced to give to charity?*

Weekly English Practice

19th January 2017

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“iLook, iThink, iSpeak” Express yourself better!

STREETS OF LONDON - Ralph McTell



Click on the link and listen to this 1972 folk classic and the writer talking about his song.

HAVE YOU SEEN THE OLD MAN IN THE CLOSED
DOWN MARKET?
KICKING UP THE PAPERS WITH HIS WORN OUT
SHOES
IN HIS EYES YOU SEE NO PRIDE AND HANGING
LOOSELY AT HIS SIDE
YESTERDAY'S PAPER, TELLING YESTERDAY'S NEWS
SO HOW CAN YOU TELL ME YOU'RE LONELY?
AND SAY FOR YOU THAT THE SUN DON'T SHINE?
LET ME TAKE YOU BY THE HAND AND LEAD YOU
THROUGH THE STREETS OF LONDON
I'LL SHOW YOU SOMETHING TO MAKE YOU
CHANGE YOUR MIND

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AND IN THE ALL NIGHT CAFE AT A QUARTER
PAST ELEVEN
SAME OLD MAN SITTING THERE ON HIS OWN
LOOKING AT THE WORLD OVER THE RIM OF HIS
TEACUP
AND EACH TEA LASTS AN HOUR AND HE
WANDERS HOME ALONE
SO HOW CAN YOU TELL ME THAT YOU'RE
LONELY?
AND SAY FOR YOU THAT THE SUN DON'T SHINE?
LET ME TAKE YOU BY THE HAND AND LEAD YOU
THROUGH THE STREETS OF LONDON
I'LL SHOW YOU SOMETHING TO MAKE YOU
CHANGE YOUR MIND

HAVE YOU SEEN THE OLD GIRL WHO WALKS THE
STREETS OF LONDON?
DIRT IN HER HAIR AND HER CLOTHES IN RAGS
SHE'S NO TIME FOR TALKING, SHE JUST KEEPS
RIGHT ON WALKING
CARRYING HER HOME, IN TWO CARRIER BAGS
SO HOW CAN YOU TELL ME YOU'RE LONELY
AND SAY FOR YOU THAT THE SUN DON'T SHINE

HAVE YOU SEEN THE OLD MAN OUTSIDE THE
SEAMAN'S MISSION?
MEMORY FADING WITH THE MEDAL RIBBONS
THAT HE WEARS
AND IN THE WINTER CITY, THE RAIN CRIES A
LITTLE PITY
FOR ONE MORE FORGOTTEN HERO, AND A
WORLD THAT DOESN'T CARE
SO HOW CAN YOU TELL ME THAT YOU'RE
LONELY?
AND SAY FOR YOU THAT THE SUN DON'T SHINE?
LET ME TAKE YOU BY THE HAND AND LEAD YOU
THROUGH THE STREETS OF LONDON
I'LL SHOW YOU SOMETHING TO MAKE YOU
CHANGE YOUR MIND

- 1. How does the song make you feel?**
- 2. What is the song's message?**
- 3. How can the problem of homelessness be solved?**

What are problems in the photos and what are your solutions?

